

his little heart (beats so fast) by heygh0uls

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Summary:

Eddie is twelve and thirteen and fourteen; fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen; he's eighteen, then forty. He's also very in love with Richie.

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1. You are twelve. You can't feel your arm. Well, you can. But it's excruciating, the pain, the shock, everything makes you frozen, staring fear in the face, unable to look away, but *him*, he's grabbing your face, forcing you to look at him, shouts as much, too. Screams at you with that big mouth of his, that trashmouth, screaming, "Look at me! Look at me!" and you want to tell him you are looking, you're always looking, but fear twists your tongue, inside and out, and also, just like that pain in your arm, you've got that pain in your chest. You're twelve and you're carrying the biggest secret a person can ever carry and it disgusts you the way the leper disgusts you, dirty, dirty, dirty. You'll disgust him, too. But he wants you to look at him, and he's not giving you a choice, grabbing your face in his grubby hands, dirt and blood caked under his nails, dirt and blood on his face, his glasses smudged by oily fingers, and finally, finally, *finally* you're looking at him, through the pain, through the fear, and all you see is how beautiful he is, and that's so fucked up of you, look at him, Eds, look at me, look at—

You are twelve and you're torn between being blinded by the most beautiful boy ever, blurred by unshed tears, but you know he's the most gorgeous thing you've ever seen—you *know* he is with his too big teeth and too big eyes and too big heart—God, he's an angel in a shitty Hawaiian shirt—and by fear, always by fear, one eye on that beautiful boy and one eye on fear, *it won't do you any good to run just a dime just a dime a quarter free*, and then that goddamn stupid beautiful boy gets your eyes on him one final time and you start to scream though you don't think you ever stopped and he grips you tight and *crack!* You screech, but your arm is okay, but he's letting you go, but when he finds out, you'll disgust him. You know you'll disgust him.

2. You are thirteen and so is he, though he by a few months, which means he's older. "So I know more. I'm an old dog, Eds. Got tricks aplenty. Just ask, yeah?" And he claims he's kissed one Miss Molly Markle behind the Aladdin, everyone calls bull but he swears he did it and yeah, Richie's an old talker, but it's true that one time he talked himself out of a month of detentions and he hasn't had to

serve since—it's true you were there you know you do everything together *except for kiss girls* you've never kissed a girl why haven't you done it yet (dimes dimes dimes, you don't own any dimes)—so he's not lying. If he got ambitious, you'd know, but kissing? You've seen the older kids scoff at kissing, claiming it's baby in comparison to what they get up to, and you know it, and he knows it, so why would he lie about kissing her? Bill asks her the next day, you watch him from your locker, and she blushes and nods and oh, oh, oh.

He doesn't belong to you anymore.

Not that he ever did, not like that, but now he's got to make time for you and for the rest and for Molly and for Jane and for Sarah and for Beth and for Lily and for—this isn't very fun, can we stop listing your escapades, Richie?

"I'm going to kiss every girl in the eighth grade, Eds, and you can quote me on that!" And when he winks at you, make sure you laugh like it doesn't hurt, when you think it might be the worst pain in the world. (Your arm, your arm, your arm. There's a cast you keep in your closet and you make sure it's hidden from your mother every time she goes into your room and when did you need it? And why do you keep it? It's diseased and disgusting and *dirty*. And it says *lover*. You keep it hidden from the invasive eyes of your mother every time she goes into your room.)

3. You are fourteen, and your mother doesn't let you run track. It's not your dream, but you've got lean legs from running running running away running towards you don't know what but it's something, and your mother grabs your arm as she drags you out of the coaches' office and out into the bright sunlight where you see girls playing sand volleyball and boys out in the field running, running, running. You look away before your mother catches you. You pretend you don't know why guilt grows low in your stomach.

Later, you go to a basketball game with your friends. The team sucks, but you're not watching the sport anyway. You keep glancing back, though, back at the players sweaty and slick and nice and you look back to your friends; they're all grinning and laughing, even when someone walking by sticks gum in Beverly's hair (she just rolls her eyes, telling them all about this new method she learned where you

cover it up in peanut butter, wait a minute, and *voila!* no more gum in your hair) and even when Bill accidentally spills his popcorn, which really means he spills the group's popcorn, you all just keep smiling.

Of course, it's your fault the fun ends.

Your mother comes barreling up the bleachers, like a bullet but a million times larger, and you feel sick to your stomach, the smile finally dropped from your face. She doesn't let you run track and she doesn't let you run at all and she doesn't let you watch sports and she doesn't let you enjoy anything. You think it might be payback for the cast you still have in your closet it's been two years and you still have it in your closet so many things can fit into your closet—"Isn't that right, Eddie-bear?"

You tear your eyes away from the players still down on the court. You didn't hear her. You nod anyway. You feel someone's eyes on you, and you wonder if that's how the players feel when you stare at them. When you turn, it's Richie, watching you with a razor blade sharpness that you feel isn't usual for him. You swallow, smile, and allow your mother to drag you away from your friends, away from the game, away from things you shouldn't be thinking about.

4. You are fifteen. You know you don't have asthma, but your inhaler sits heavy in the fanny pack you never got around to losing. You carry so many things around in it; you take out so few things. Your eyes are locked on the scene before you, but you know you aren't looking at the same thing the others are looking at. You're looking at dark curls, not fiery red, at chunky glasses, not ruddy freckles, at boy, boy, boy—not girl, girl, girl. You take a peek at Ben and Bill, note that even Stan and Mike, they're all staring mystified at the way smoke curls into Beverly's mouth, past her cherry lips. You look at your shoes; you know what causes the shame you feel, you know the source of disgust within you, this great, rotting thing that eats you from the inside out. You know it well now, and all you can do is push it down, reflecting it in the way you keep your head down, your eyes locked on the dirt beneath your feet.

Finally, you look up again because the stupid joint is being passed around and it's Beverly to Mike, and it's so smooth, so quick, and you

try not to be pleased at the way Mike easily leans over to Stan and pushes the smoke into his mouth because you know it means nothing, but then you look back in front of you and *he's* staring at you with those big ass eyes behind those big ass glasses (deniability—it's about deniability and denial) and your heart is frozen in your chest then suddenly it's off in a rapid fire race against no one, only losers at the finish line, and not the Losers but genuine losers, ones who have nothing and feel it deep in them, know they've got nothing and life can't even go up, losers who get out shovels and start digging—you know that's what's at the finish line, but even as you try to take your eyes off him, get your heart back to normal, you can't, and sometimes you wonder what would happen if you let yourself lose.

He wraps his lips around the stick now back between his slender fingers, sucks in a breath, then he leans forward. You do too. You pretend this means nothing—Mike and Stan, a thread of smoke between them—and to him, it probably does, but to you, your lips pressed just slightly to his, you think it means everything.

5. You are sixteen, and Richie spends the night even though he shouldn't, even though he isn't allowed, not technically, your mother banned him long ago, banned him from so much as looking at your house, but you've got a tree outside your window and he knows how to climb and sometimes at night he goes tap tap tapping at your window and you let him in. Every time you let him in.

He hops into bed right next to you, and the moonlight slashes across his face, illuminating his pale skin, and you've never seen anything prettier—you're certain you'll never see anything prettier. Even in his sleep he moves, as active as he is awake, face changing expressions every couple of seconds, fingers twitching, legs kicking out. He always bruises you up from his kicks, but you don't mind. Sometimes, you press your thumbs down onto the mottled purple marks, wincing and hissing at the sting, but you do it anyway because it reminds you it was real, he was there with you and he'll return to you even though you're no different from the rest, even though the rest are arguably better, never fussing or complaining, never fighting or arguing, not the way you do. Everyone is so much better, has so much more to offer. Their houses are welcoming to him, open doors he can traipse into the way he does, yet you are trapped in a fortress,

complete with moat and alligators, a dragon, trained guards ready to shoot him down, yet miraculously he reappears again and again, ready with some late bedtime tale and a scrape or two he needs you to patch up. And you always think to yourself *tonight, tonight I'll ask him why, I'll ask him why he always chooses me, out of everyone, out of so many easier options, why do you choose me?*

But you never do.

When he leaves the next morning, you roll over to find something poke you in the side. You sit up and uncover a tape. There's no label, and you know you shouldn't, but you go find the Walkman he gave you (he gave it to you and he said it was new but you haven't seen him with his own since and you know every time you pick it up and stick a tape in it you know what it means what he gave up what he gave to you—you know what it means but do you really?) and you stick it in, putting your headphones on and closing your eyes, unsure what song you'll hear or if you'll hear anything at all.

> This makes sense, it makes sense, and you like it, and you know he likes it, and okay, this makes sense, it's some rock playlist, you get it, you like it.

> This makes zero sense what were you thinking what is this playlist that's rock right? That's rock (maybe?) and you like it and he likes it but you didn't know he likes it and you need to listen to this again what are these lyrics what do they mean why would he like this what does it mean what does it mean what does it mean?

> You all like this song, you and the other Losers, you all sing it and you love it and he loves it and you know that, and you get it. This you get. You know what it means.

> He doesn't like love songs. This is a love song. It doesn't sound like one. But it's a love song.

> You roll your eyes. Your foot taps along anyway. You withhold the urge to do more than that; any more and your feet will alert your mother who will storm up the steps and see you with the Walkman, see you dancing, see you moving, and she'll take it all away. You know she'll take it all away. Your foot stops tapping, and you wait for

the next song to come on.

> You stare at your closet door. He doesn't know about the Elton John poster taped to the interior side. No one knows about the poster. Elton croons he doesn't know if your eyes are green or blue.

> What does it mean what does it mean what does it mean?

> FUCK.

You don't know if he meant to leave the tape, and you don't tell him you have it, either. He doesn't ask if you've seen a missing tape; he doesn't ask about anything. You never keep secrets from each other; there are so many secrets you keep from him.

6. You are seventeen. You're sitting with your friends, the best friends in the world, your closest friends, your only friends, in a circle on the floor, a bottle between the seven of you, and your heart is rapid fire in your chest the way it was when you were fourteen at that basketball game your mother dragged you from, and you can't get it to stop, in fact it only speeds up as the bottle spins spins spins and lands right on...

"Well, I'll be! Miss Marsh," he's got his voices out, this time in some Southern Belle drawl that everyone including you rolls their eyes at, "what'll it be? Truth...", he grins and you stare determinedly down at the bottle, "or dare?"

Beverly chooses dare. She always chooses dare. You once heard Bill say he likes that about her. Ben agreed. It doesn't mean much to you. She's cool regardless of her choice. Richie dares her to lick her foot. She does it.

The bottle lands on you. You don't have a pattern. No dare, dare, truth; truth, truth, dare; you just choose whatever you feel at the moment. "Dare." The voice that comes out of your mouth is not your own. She smiles at you like she isn't holding a knife behind her back. She smiles even as she gets the knife out, even as she dares you to kiss Richie, even as the group laughs and even as your world falls apart.

There's a forfeit. Don't want to do the dare? Drink. Obviously. But you want to do the dare. You want to kiss him. You've never wanted anything more. He stares at you, cheeks flushed red, from alcohol or embarrassment you don't know. You think you look the same. You push yourself up off the ground with shaky hands, sitting there crouched for a second, the two of you doing nothing but watching each other, and you know this move is yours, you have to be the one to do this, he won't go to you, only you to him, but you're stuck, and everyone is looking at you now, giggles dying out behind hands, eyes losing their shine as the moment stretches on and on and on and you do nothing.

It's your move. You have to move. You finally start to move, crawling over to him, on hands and knees—you are a wild animal, a feral thing that can't be tamed, that doesn't want to be tamed, and you kneel over him, while he's got his arms stretched out behind him, chin tilted up, lips parted, waiting. *Do you want me the way I crave you?* He closes his eyes. You bow your head (this is prayer this is holy this is your religion) and kiss him.

He kisses you back.

It's never brought up again.

7. You are eighteen, and you're in your second month at college, and you are alone and afraid, but your mother calls you every week—but you don't want her to. You've never wanted her to.

There's a boy in your stats class and he smiles at you every time you walk in and you smile back and he's got curly hair and glasses and he reminds you so much of someone, the name on the tip of your tongue every time, and you're waiting for the Freudian slip, the moment you say that Houdini name instead of the boy's, but it never comes. So he smiles at you every time you walk into class and you smile back and eventually he asks if you want to get dinner and you say no.

You wanted to say yes. You screamed at yourself to say yes, but you've got a rapid fire heart and there's smoke in your lungs, smoke that's been trapped there for who knows how long, smoke that spills out past your lips as you cough and cough and cough and your asthma isn't real but you've got an inhaler anyway and wasn't there

someone who used to carry around an inhaler and they didn't have asthma but they carried it around for you? They did it for you and they did so many things for you and they were always there for you and they were so for you, for you, for you—and you've forgotten them.

Elton John comes on the radio that night, and you don't know why but you feel sixteen. Elton's forgotten if your eyes are green or blue. You get it; you really do.

1. You are forty and you remember. You walk in and there are your best friends, your closest friends, your only friends. There's only two so far, but you remember them all. Back in New York, your wife (you don't love her, you never loved her, not the way you should, and back then you could never say it but you *can't* love her) waits for a ghost. You won't return. Derry isn't home, but New York isn't either. Home isn't a place, you are a Hallmark card as you think *home is a person*. Home is your friends. Home is—

“—the Losers Club has officially begun!”

And you turn around and the Freudian slip that never happened finally does. Your lips form around *Richie* and you can't believe you ever forgot. Suddenly you're twelve and he's got your eyes on him; you're thirteen and you've got a cast in your closet that says *lover*; you're fourteen and he's looking at you with a razor blade sharpness; you're fifteen and he's putting that smoke in your lungs and it means everything; you're sixteen and he tap tap taps on your window and leaves a mixtape maybe not meant for you but you keep it anyway; you're seventeen and you kiss him and he kisses back; you're eighteen and you miss him—you don't remember him, you never got the chance to, but your soul remembers, and you search for him in the curls of some other boy, in the way his glasses take up most of his face, and when you can't find him, when that other boy asks you to dinner, you say no, and now you know why.

Drinks fill you up and kickstart your rapid fire heart and you say things you mean but pretend you don't and you let yourself get too close and you let yourself get burnt and you swear he does the same.

Later, when you climb into the clubhouse, you look at the hammock,

cobwebbed and dusty but there, and he does the same, you know he does, you see him do it, and you swear it means something, and everything you two do is a push and pull, a step to the left to the right, a dance only you two know, the entire time you two are locked in this dance and everyone else can only stand back and watch.

And when you're on your own, and when you go to get an inhaler (you know you don't have asthma but just in case and maybe he'll carry one for you too, maybe he always has but never knew why), you come face to face with fear again, but this time, it's not that scary. And you wrap your hands around its throat and you squeeze and squeeze and squeeze, tighter and tighter, and you think you could die for love, you would die for love, but you'd kill for it too.

And when you've got your hands wrapped around not a throat but a spear, a weapon, a monster killer, you *know* you'd kill for love. And without a doubt, you'd die for it too. So you take that chance and you believe and you throw the spear the weapon the monster killer and you watch as Richie drops to the ground and you throw caution into the wind entirely for once in your life and you hold yourself over him and he stares up at you not just like you've saved him but like he's never seen anything more beautiful in his entire life, like he never will see anything more beautiful in his life, he stares up at you in a way you understand, in a way only you two will understand.

And when it's his turn to hover over you, in between trying to keep your eyes open, you stare up at him the same. You will die for love and you won't regret it, you shouldn't regret it, you can't regret it.

But you don't die. You float between reality and dream so long you think you might, that you missed your cue and you're in some in-between, not dead but not living, but then there are sirens, and you've still got your rapid-fire heart, and you're a very lucky man, and you believe that, but you don't know where you are, you don't know who you're with, you don't know, you don't know, you don't know.

But then you do. Then you come to, high off pain meds that cast a hazy glow to everything, but you see clearly that it's *his* hand in yours, and you think that shouldn't be allowed—not like as kids, but like against the law because he's not your husband, and shit, you're

so high off whatever medicinal cocktail they've got you on that for a second you pretend, he is your husband and he is your home and he is your everything (the first one is the only thing you have to pretend), and then your head lolls back and everything blurs into dark.

And then you're coming back down, and everywhere hurts, but his hand is still in yours. The others are there too, but it's him next to you, and you hate to think it (not really), but you wouldn't have it any other way. You don't know how they convinced the doctors they can stay, you've got to be in the ICU or something—granted, this is Derry and nothing is ever quite right here—but you also don't really care.

What matters is that you're alive and he's holding your hand. You would kill for love and die for love, but maybe you can live for love too.

Author's Note:

** [here's the mixtape richie made eddie](#) (yeah it was not an accident he left it there lol)

** title from "hounds of love" by kate bush (lmao just realized i deleted "it" ,,,, lmao)

anyway in the last section stan obviously isn't mentioned but bc of that he can totally be alive so yeah uwu also this is MY reddie fic and i WILL reference richard siken and finally sorry for the train wreck that is this i still don't know their characters so lmao

p.s. i had to post this via phone so if it looks shitty,,,, y'all know why

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